

Grading for Mastery: Equitable Practices to Support Student Success





Rod Garcia

Program Coordinator

Teaching & Learning

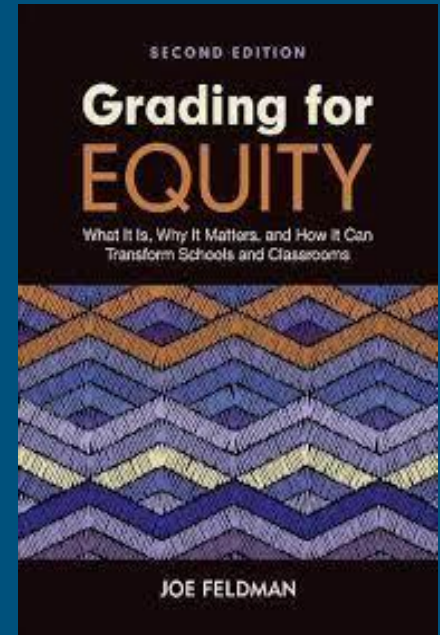
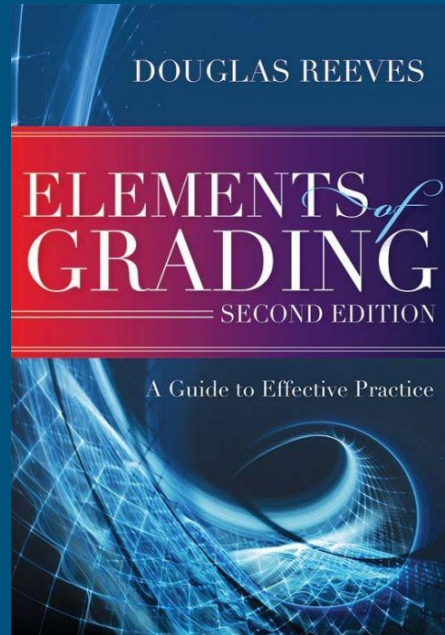
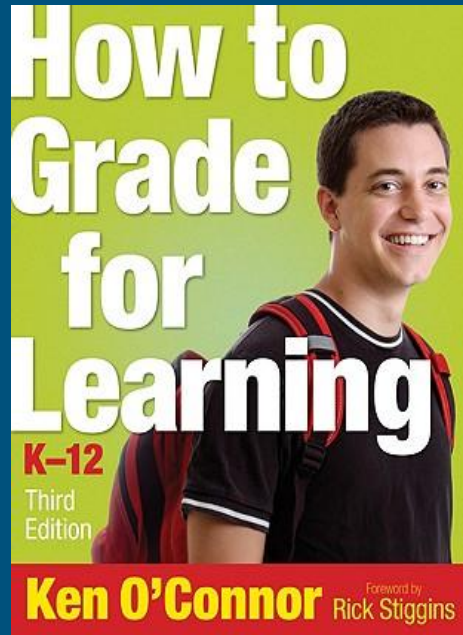
Monterey County Office of Education

Email: Rodgarcia@montereycoe.org

Twitter: @MrRodGarcia



Foundations





Norms

- Be curious staying open to possibilities
- Listen to understand
- Rely on each other
- Stay engaged
- Experience discomfort
- Speak your truth
- Expect and accept non-closure

Mindset Hack

MINDSET HACKS

JUST TALK

Use the following question to begin a conversation...

What do you remember about your experience receiving grades as a middle school student?

When answering, state whether or not you considered it a positive or negative experience and why.



FOCUS ON
HUMAN VALUES



SHOW
DON'T TELL



EMBRACE
EXPERIMENTATION



BE MINDFUL
OF PROCESS



BIAS TOWARD
ACTION



RADICAL
COLLABORATION



CRAFT CLARITY

d.MINDSETS

ACTION

COLLABORATION



Session Outcomes

- Understand the Importance of Effective Teacher Feedback
- Reflection on grading and feedback practices for student growth in the classroom
- Examine the influence of teacher decision-making on grading practices
- Plan grading strategies for student growth and learning



Guiding Question

What's best for all students?



Educational Equity

Educational equity means that each child receives what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential

Working towards equity in schools involves:

- Ensuring equally high outcomes for all participants in our educational system; removing the predictability of success or failures that currently correlates with any social or cultural factor
- Interrupting inequitable practices, examining biases, and creating inclusive multicultural school environments for adults and children
- Discovering and cultivating the unique gifts, talents, and interests that every human possesses

- The National Equity Project



History of Grading

Our current grading systems in the U.S. are over a century old and based on the need to easily sort students for factory employment in the industrial era

Industrial Era Beliefs:

- Achievement occurs on a curve and only some students are capable of meeting academic standards
- Extrinsic motivation with a focus on student behavior is the most effective way to influence student learning
- Schools are expected to sort students

21st Century Beliefs:

- All students are capable of meeting academic standards
- Intrinsic motivation is more effective in influencing student learning and activating higher-order thinking
- Schools should not sort students



Examples

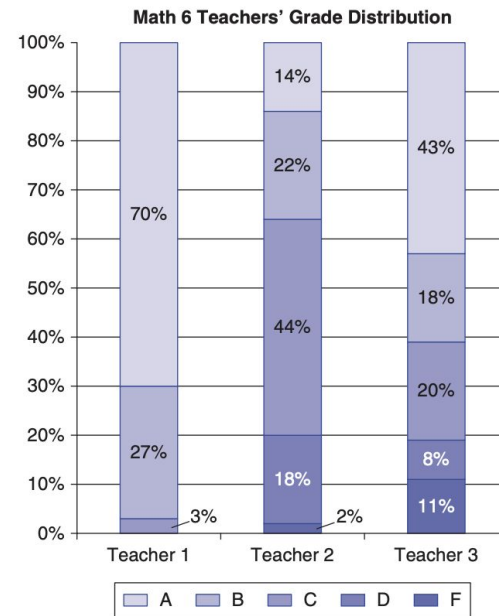
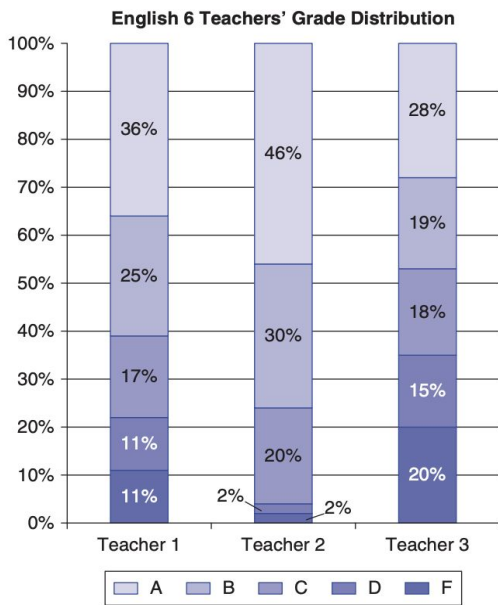
Our current grading system may play a role in perpetuating the achievement and opportunity gaps of the past, without our intending to do so

2 HS Students Entering 10th Grade	Evan	Maya
Final grade in 9th grade English	B	B
During the summer before 10th grade	took a writing course - cost \$500, required daily rides to Berkeley	spent the summer caring for younger siblings and working
Grade on first writing assignment in 10th grade English	A	C-

- The students' grades were based on access to resources before instruction began rather than an accurate measure of their learning and growth in class



Examples





Student Perspectives

“Every teacher has their own way of grading, which is confusing to the students. When you first change classes, you don't know how that teacher's going to grade the homework, so you don't really know how to do it as far as making sure all your answers are right, because some teachers, they don't grade it at all. They just look through it and say, ‘Oh, you tried, 100%.’ And then others are just, ‘No, you have to get this answer exactly right, or you're not getting the points.’ It's really confusing, because you don't know how it's going to be.”

- 9th Grade (from Grading for Equity)



Grading for Mastery

Mastery refers to a student's ability to demonstrate a deep understanding of the essential knowledge and skills in a specific subject. It goes beyond mere memorization or completion of assignments and indicates that a student has reached a level of proficiency where they can apply their knowledge in real-world situations and contexts. (Joe Feldman)

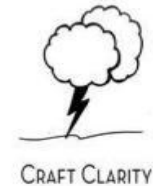
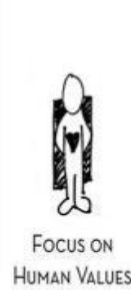
In the context of grading for equity, the concept of mastery is essential because it shifts the focus from just accumulating points or completing tasks to genuinely grasping the subject matter.

Mindset Hack

MINDSET HACKS JUST TALK

Use the following question to begin a conversation...

When did you first learn how to grade as a teacher? Who/What informed your practice? Have your grading practices changed over the years? Why or Why not?



d.MINDSETS



MARK BOSWELL

Assistant Head of Upper School, Miami Country Day School (CAJ)

JOE FELDMAN

Founder and CEO, Crescendo Education Group



3 Pillars of Equitable Grading for Mastery

Accurate

Our grading uses calculations that are mathematically sound, easy to understand, and correctly describe a student's level of academic performance.

Bias-Resistant

Our grades are based on valid evidence of a student's content knowledge, not on evidence that is likely to be *influenced* by a teacher's implicit bias or reflect a student's environment.

Motivational

Our practices motivate students to achieve academic success, support a growth mindset, give students opportunities for redemption, and are transparent and understandable.

Adapted from *Grading for Equity* by Joe Feldman

Collaborative Posters

- Within your group, summarize the assigned article and create a collaborative poster (20 min)
- Present to the group the key points/information (3-5 min)
- Include how you might incorporate some of the concepts covered



Collaborative Posters Grouping

Groupings:

Chapter 1 Grading for Equity

1: p.3-8

2: p. 9-14

KQED: How Teachers are Changing Grading Practices with an Eye on Equity

3: Intro & Grading and Equity

4: Strategies & Putting it into Practice

What's in a grade?

5: Intro & A new Approach

6: How to Begin & Focusing on Teachers

Research on Equitable Grading for Mastery

Qualitative Data: Students

- Are more motivated and have more hope in possibility of academic success
- Less stressed and less focused on “points”
- Speak about their progress in terms of content strengths and areas of growth
- Have more positive and stronger relationships with teachers

Qualitative Data: Teachers

- More confidence in accuracy and fairness of grades
- Fewer disagreements with students (and caregivers) about grades
- Less stressful classrooms
- Reallocation of teachers’ time from daily data entry to a focus on developing curriculum and instruction

Feldman, J. (2017) "[Do Your Grading Practices Undermine Equity Initiatives?](#)" Leadership Magazine.

Feldman, J. (2019) "[What Traditional Grading Gets Wrong](#)" Education Week.

Weissman, S. (2019) "[How Can Colleges Make Grading More Equitable?](#)" Diverse Issues in Higher Education.



3 Pillars for your practice

The diagram consists of three stylized pillars standing on a common purple base. The left pillar is green and contains the word "Accurate". The middle pillar is light green and contains the words "Bias-Resistant". The right pillar is orange and contains the word "Motivational". Each pillar has a decorative top with three horizontal bars. The entire graphic is set against a white background within a larger blue frame.

Accurate

Bias-
Resistant

Motivational



3 Pillars for your practice examples

Class Trackers

Pillar: Motivational

- Students completed and filled out a class tracker after each unit assessment.
- Filled out together in class when reviewing assessments.
- Broke down assessment by learning targets from unit - ex: preterite -ar verbs, present progressive, etc.
- Broke this down into 0-4 scale, so students could see their mastery or where to continue to grow.

Impact on Students

- All students were able to clearly see what topics they have mastered or which ones to come get help on to re-learn/re-take
- Students knew that learning is continuous so that when they did not get a 3-4 mastery, they were able to come to access period. More students were willing to come work on the topic they missed when they knew what they understood/didn't understand



3 Pillars for your practice examples

Working without Points

Pillar: Motivation

- Middle School is the time when children learn how to learn
- Science notebooks no longer graded for organization or completion
- Students allowed to reference notebook on assessments to model how the world recalls information
- Positivity reinforces the stages of learning - growth mindset

Impact on Students

- All students still remained accountable for doing assignments in notebook... a few needed a boost of support
- Learned how to and why organization is important
- Felt less stressed and confident about the work they completed in prep for tests
- Number of As & Bs was slightly higher
- Amount of Cs increased and D/Fs were 1%



Thank you PG Middle!

